

*Ends of Providence in appointing that
the Poor we should have always with us
consider'd*

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I N A
S E R M O N

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By JOHN ALLEN, M. D.

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JOHN xii. 8.

*For the Poor always ye have with you;
but me ye have not always.*



OUR blessed Saviour by raising Lazarus from the dead, having endeared himself more than ever to the family he belonged to; we find him six days before the passover sojourning among them at Bethany, and partaking of an entertainment they had provided for him. It was now a time of great festivity among the Jews, and our Lord made no scruple of complying with an innocent national custom: *The son of man came eating and drinking; though it was ever within the strictest bounds of temperance and moderation; shewing us that, as we ought, we may also use the world without abusing it.*

B. THERE

THERE are great differences in the natural complexion and temper of well-minded and good people ; and that sister of *Lazarus*, whose name was *Mary*, seems to be distinguished by a temper that was warm, tender and pathetic. This natural passion being now sanctified, she shows it here in an act of sensible affection to our Saviour ; for she took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of *Jesus*, and wiped his feet with her hair : and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment, ver. 3. However extravagant and odd such an action may seem to us, it had no such appearance in that country, and in those times : The custom in feasts of pouring oil on the face and head of the guests was almost universal, being designed as an emblem of gladness and welcome. And if *Mary* went a little beyond the national usage, and having poured one part of the ointment on Christ's head, (as the parallel places ^a assert she did) she then anointed his feet with the remainder, and wiped them with her long and loosely flowing hair, she only did it as a mark of her peculiar humility and affection to our Lord, and the action had nothing ridiculous in it. A fault indeed is found by *Judas* with what *Mary* had done ; but it is not the action, but the

^a Mat. xxvi. 6. Mark xiii. 3.

expence only that is objected to, *ver. 5.*
Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? Any one would have thought, that the person who says this, had been hugely disposed to acts of charity; whereas in reality *This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag that contained the little stock of Christ and his disciples, and bare what was therein,* *ver. 6.* and thought, no doubt, that he should be able, out of such a sum, to secrete a part for his own private use. —
 How deep and subtle is hypocrisy! that can cover over the vilest designs with a pious pretence! Let this instance be a lesson to all men to watch over every tendency to any thing of the like nature. There is no good work in the world, that we may not upon some pretence or other shift off our hands, and wind ourselves out of; but let men take care that there is not a real covetousness, and a faulty love of the world, lying at the bottom of all their creeping excuses; God can find this out, though it may be too deeply covered for men ever to discern it.

It must be very mortifying and grievous to this tender spirited woman, to see such a slur cast by one of Christ's own disciples on what she had done in the warmth

of her zeal and pious affection, and it might sink her beyond even any power of making a proper reply; but our Lord takes up her cause, and becomes her advocate, *ver. 7. Then said Jesus, Let her alone, against the day of my burying hath she kept this.* She had done well in giving me so costly a mark of her affection; but this action has a propriety and use even beyond what she designed. As I am in a few days more to die, she has in effect embalmed me for my funeral; she would not have thought this ointment too good to be employed in such a service, if I was actually dead; when I am so, she may not have the opportunity of doing me that friendly office; *Let her alone*, she has only a little anticipated my funeral, and embalmed me for it a few days before the time.—How condescending and kind is the blessed Jesus, who puts the best construction on the well meant actions of his saints, and often in his wise providence makes them subservient to good and useful purposes beyond what they could ever have thought of.

PEOPLE of Judas his spirit may say of the charity for which I stand an advocate this day, *To what purpose is this waste?* They may think the expences you are at in teaching the poor knowledge, and in endeavouring to form their minds to religion
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and virtue, might be better employ'd in providing food and cloathing for their bodies; but you desire them *to let you alone*; you think the *minds*, the *morals*, and above all, the *souls* of the poor, to be very deserving of your care. You have a concern for the honour of God and your Saviour, and the spread and progress of his religion in the world; and therefore however worldly minds may think it *waste*, you do not doubt but he for whose sake you do it, will vindicate and applaud it.

ANOTHER thing our Saviour suggests in favour of *Mary*, and as a vindication of the propriety of what she had done, is what is contained in the text: *The poor ye have always with you; but me ye have not always.* The words, you know, were directed to *Judas*; and one cannot help observing the mildness with which our Lord treats so vile a wretch: though he knew the badness of his heart, yet that is taken no notice of *now*, and our Lord argues upon his having that *care for the poor* which he pretended. He leaves the hypocrite to unravel himself, and it was not long before he did it effectually.

THE poor ye have always with you. They are deserving of your concern, and I would never discourage any instance of com-

compassion towards them; but ye can be friend and show kindness to them at any time; *for the poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always.* I am going out of this world; it will not be many days, before I shall be out of the reach of any such instance of respect and affection as this good woman hath now shewn to me; let then this last act of her regard, this kindness of her's to your dying master and friend, pass uncensured; let it have the applause which it well deserves. Let respect be shewn to me this once, and ever afterwards let it fall into the channel you propose for it. *The poor ye have always with you.* In which words our Lord supposes that as there was then such a diversity in the outward condition and circumstance of mankind, there would always be the same; accordingly, what I design for the subject of this discourse, shall be

- I. A little to open and illustrate this known and obvious fact, *That the poor we have always with us.*
- II. To consider the ends of providence in this appointment and dispensation.
- III. To shew what use we should make of it for our own instruction and conduct.

I. I shall open and illustrate this known and obvious fact, *That the poor we have always with us.*

'Tis certain that God *made of one blood all the nations that dwell on the face of the earth.* We are all the descendants of one pair, and therefore, absolutely, and with respect to any meer rights of nature, are all upon a level: and yet with how vast a difference is property now divided?—How this inequality came about at first is easy to be accounted for; for as the notions of mankind are different as to ease, pleasure and happiness, and thereupon different tempers and pursuits would be form'd, it was impossible, as men multiplied on the face of the earth, that they should agree to divide property equally among them. Some, as *Nimrod*, would be men of an unbounded ambition and covetousness; and these by fraud and violence would be engrossing as much as they could of the proportion and property of others. Some on the other hand, would be indolent, careless and prodigal; and these must necessarily soon lose their share of the common distribution. In a word, though God made all men equal, the present state of human nature makes it morally impossible that they should continue so for any considerable time. Nay,
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'tis easy to see, that if an equality in circumstances and condition among men were to be restored, by such causes as the foregoing, the ballance would soon be broken again. This is the natural account of the diversity of men's conditions in the world; and thus the case would stand upon the supposition of God's leaving things to take their own course, without any directing and interposing providence. But above, and beyond all this, we know there is a particular concern of the providence of God producing all this variety. In this *the rich and the poor meet together, that the Lord is the maker of them both* AS SUCH; *he raiseth up one, and casteth down another*, just as he pleases. The ordinary way to riches is diligence and industry; but there are many exceptions to this rule. *The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of skill — but time and chance happen to all men*^b. The meaning is, that God in his sovereign wisdom orders all these matters as he pleases.

SUCH is the situation of some in this world, that with all their temperance, frugality and care, they cannot get from under great and overbearing difficulties of condition. There are others that have more

^b Eccles. ix. 11.

than heart can wish; they have such wealth and abundance poured into their laps, that they could hardly sink and fail if they would; while others again keep in the middle state, and *have neither riches nor poverty, but food convenient for them*, Prov. xxx. 8.

BUT the fact is too plain and obvious to need *any* proof, or *much* illustration. What is of the most importance on this subject is,

II. To consider the ends of providence in this appointment and dispensation, that there should be this variety in the external circumstances and condition of mankind, and that *the poor we should have always with us*.

THE very variety is beautiful and comely, and it looks as if God took a delight in this, for he has scattered it through all his works that come within our knowledge and observation. In surveying the world of creatures which God has made, we observe both a vast variety, as to their nature, capacity and perfection, as also a regular scale and gradation from one of these various orders of beings to another; and with what uniform regularity does this gradation rise from the inferior to the higher natures, and before the passage is

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made from the one into the other, how nearly do the highest beings of one order touch upon the lowest of the next above it? If the perfection of beauty is uniformity with variety, here that perfection is. Besides, the variety which rises from the orderly scale and gradation of beings in general, there is yet another in particular natures; if we look below ourselves, how infinitely diversify'd are the species of plants and animals, how different their degrees of perfection and excellence, and by how just and orderly steps do they rise above each other? Above us are thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, angels and arch-angels, cherubim and seraphim; little as we know of the order and œconomy of the upper world, there must be different degrees of perfection and glory correspondent to all these different names and titles. If we come and take a survey of the nature and state of man, we shall find the same uniform and beautiful variety, in the different capacity, and understanding of individuals; their different tempers, inclinations and pursuits, and a thousand other things, which, as it is *unnecessary*, it would also be *tedious* to mention. 'Tis natural then to expect that the variety that shews itself so much in every thing else, should have its place also in the matter before us, and that what the Creator delights

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delights in the exhibition of through all his works, should appear in the diversify'd states and circumstances of mankind.

BUT there are no *lufus providentiæ*; that variety which I have spoken of as so beautifully conspicuous through all the works of God, is not merely for its own sake, but as it may answer some great and wise design. Let us then humbly enquire what may be the ends of providence in the very different conditions and external circumstances of mankind, and why he hath ordain'd that *the poor we shall have always with us.*

NOW this dispensation may be considered, either

1. As it is useful to the poor themselves who are under it. Or,
2. As it is of service to the rest of mankind.

1. I DOUBT not to make it evident, that it is of use and advantage to the poor themselves, that they are *such*. It is true, poverty is a very grievous burden, and made more so by that contempt and scorn, that too generally, but most unreasonably, attend it. So frightful a thing is poverty, that if

our views and hopes were confined to the present life, there is hardly any thing but what a man might be tempted to do, to extricate himself out of it; but if we consider this life as a state of probation and discipline for another, 'tis in a great measure an indifferent thing how we are treated in these lower respects. To a man that is travelling for his life, the accommodations of the road, be they better or worse, are things of very trifling consideration. — So far indeed as external circumstances may have an influence upon our religion and virtue, and the state of our souls with respect to another world, they are important things; and if poverty was a condition that was of all the most dangerous to these interests, we should be wise to dread and deprecate it. It has indeed its temptations and snares, but not greater than the other extreme, if so great. The state of probation we are now in requires there should be some; and every thing we know of the wisdom and goodness of our heavenly father, obliges us to believe that every situation into which providence disposes creatures, is most fit for those that are in it, and that no other sort of dispensations would suit their state and temper so well. In this probationary state 'tis fit that the passive virtues of men should be proved, and there is no man in the world but has some burden

den or other that does prove them; and therefore as some are visited with sickness, others with the loss or embittering of their dearest earthly delights, God visits others by poverty. This, like other afflictions, searches the heart to the bottom, tries men's patience, contentment, dependance on God and resignation to his disposals; and in a word, if they have integrity, it *brings it forth as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day.*

AND as poverty is a wise instrument of probation and trial, it is also a proper means of discipline and improvement. It is adapted to keep the spirit calm and humble, it leads men to a more entire and absolute dependance on God, it produces a greater indifferency to the present world, a thing that is hard to gain in any condition, and perhaps to some tempers would be impossible if they had those alluring engagements to time and life that others have; and I am sure it is worth while to have any thing to wean us from a world which we must so soon leave, whether we are weaned from it or no. It will abate, *moreover*, a great deal of the horror of death, by which all the present temporary distinctions are levell'd at once, *where the weary are at rest, where the rich and the poor meet together, and the servant is free from his master.* It

It will, lastly, make heaven more desireable, where *there will be no more sorrow nor crying* from this or any other occasion, but *all tears shall be wiped away from our eyes*; and that fulness of joy will be more sweet and welcome, from the experience we have had of the wants and burdens of the present state.

IN a word, we do none of us *know what is good for man in this life*. God loves our prosperity, and does not willingly grieve the children of men. Poverty, like other afflictions, is designed to temper the soil, and make it fit to produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness; away then with all impatience, and murmuring complaints of the severity of your lot, and be rather thankful to God, that he will take those measures with you that are most suited to humble you, to prove you, to know what is in your hearts, whether you will keep his commandments or no, and to do you good in your latter end, Deut. viii. 2, 16.

2. THERE are wise ends of providence, with respect to mankind, to answer which God has made a diversity in men's conditions in this world, and appointed *that the poor we should have always with us*. And we may take an account of them under the following heads.

1. TIS necessary for the peace and security of the world in general, that some men should be poor. There is such an insufferable insolence in the spirits of some persons, that they are ready to say to all the world, *bow down that we may go over*; and whom mankind could not bear, if they had power in any proportion to their inclination and desire. There are others so wicked and mischievous, that they would produce a thousand disorders in the world, which neither divine nor human laws could prevent or remedy, but that they are happily restrain'd by their poverty and the narrowness of their circumstances. Therefore *the poor we have always with us*; and a great deal of the beauty of providence may be observed in putting this *hook into their nostrils*, and disposing them into circumstances that restrain them from being such plagues to the world as they otherwise would.

2. IT is for the common benefit and advantage of the world that the conditions of men should be thus diversify'd, and *that the poor we should have always with us*. There must be hands to till the ground, to fight our battles, carry on our commerce, and do the more servile and painful offices of life; how wise then

then is the order of providence, that *the poor we should have always with us*; persons whose very support depends upon their doing these services to their fellow creatures? 'Tis this subordination of men one to another, and the mutual dependance that results from it, which produces the regularity and order of the civil world, and secures the general safety and confidence, ease and happiness; and one can never enough admire the wisdom of God in the dispensation. 'Tis a common observation, that necessity has been the mother of invention: this has roused mankind from their lethargy, and set their heads and hands at work: to this we owe the cultivation of arts and sciences, the improvement of manufactures, navigation and commerce, and almost every other useful discovery: to this too has the state of learning been much indebted; the greatest ornaments of which have not commonly been those who were born to great and affluent fortunes, but persons whose necessities have stimulated and obliged them to diligence in those studies to which their genius has severally directed them.

3. 'Tis useful to *have the poor always with us*, to be monitors to those in higher life of contentment, as to God's disposal of their lot and condition. 'Tis the unhappiness of the generality, that they will
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not consider their condition absolutely, and as it is in itself, but as it stands in a comparison with that of those above them: though *the lines are fallen to them in pleasant places, and they have a goodly heritage;* all this availeth them nothing while they see so many exalted above themselves. Bad and ungrateful as this temper is, nothing is more common in the world; happy the heart that never felt its workings. Now when mankind will not consider their mercies as they are in themselves, and are discontented because 'tis not quite so well with them as it is with some, 'tis of great use to have others before their eyes of a lower rank of life: here they may see what God might have made them, and consider who has made them to differ: here they may ballance the adversity of some against the prosperity of others; and thus *setting one against the other*, they may bring their minds to a due poize, and under their own circumstances learn to be equal, contented and thankful. This is so valuable and important an end, and so adapted is the dispensation I am now treating of to answer it, that we may very well suppose providence had a view to it in appointing that *the poor we should have always with us.*

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4. *THE poor we have always with us,* to be our examples of fortitude and patience under the ordinary burdens of the present life. Those who have not the trial of poverty and a low condition, have many other trials, and are oftentimes ill enough able to bear them; and really I do not know whether the flow of riches and plenty is not apt to make the mind tender and enervate, so that the other unavoidable afflictions of life fall with a much greater weight here, than they do on those who have bore the yoke of poverty: which, with all its evils, may be observed to give a degree of strength and fortitude to the mind. Now 'tis of great use to the languid and dispirited tribe of mortals to have the poor under their eye and observation, to shame them into a higher degree of patience and courage under the common calamities of life. "Here's this and the other poor creature, "that I have taken notice of; how coarse "is their fare? how scanty their covering? how mean their dwelling? and yet "they are easy, contented and chearful. "For them to be put into my condition, "with all its terrible disadvantages, would "throw them into a joy that would be in "danger of oversetting their minds; and "yet here I sit pining away my life under
 " little

" little *puny*, perhaps *imaginary* evils; all
 " the blessings with which I am encom-
 " pass'd are overlook'd and forgot; the
 " smallest disappointment becomes master
 " of my peace, and takes away all the
 " pleasure of my being. Blush at thy self;
 " O my soul! what am I better than
 " the poorest of my fellow creatures, what
 " have I deserved more?" There is all this
 instruction in our having *the poor always*
with us; and 'tis not improbable that God
 has placed them among us to give us these
 silent admonitions, and to shame us out of
 a criminal softness of mind, and that child-
 ish ruffle which every little disappointment
 is so apt to throw us into.

5. AND lastly, *the poor we have always*
with us; that we may draw forth the bow-
 els of our compassion towards them, and
 be ready to relieve them according to our
 ability. This is very strongly implied in
 the words of the text. *Judas* pretended
 he was for having the ointment sold, and
 the money given to the poor; to which
 our Lord answers, *the poor ye have always*
with you, but me ye have not always. In
 which he plainly intimates, that we had
 the poor with us, in order to relieve them
 by acts of charity. He only urges, that on
 so peculiar an occasion as the present, what

Mary had done was right and fit, but that in other circumstances that of *Judas* was a good proposal. In every view of the case, it appears highly probable, that one great reason, why God has ordain'd that the world should be always fill'd with a number of indigent people is, that those in higher circumstances may exercise their *wisdom* and *prudence*, in singling out the most worthy and deserving objects, and their *compassion* and *charity* in relieving them according to their ability. *The poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying, thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor and to thy needy in thy land,* Deut. xv. 11. In order to befriend and further this design, God has implanted in our nature a strong propension to benevolence and the good offices of charity; and so deeply rooted is this principle within us, that, where nature is not strangely distorted, there is a wonderful pleasure attends all the exertions of it, and we never check it but there is something within that feels a pain and uneasiness, and gives us a most severe rebuke: as then here's the faculty to suit the object, and the object to suit the faculty, nothing can more plainly show that God and providence made the one for the other.

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To make this tye yet the closer, God has made the *poor, that we have always with us*, of the same nature and species with ourselves; and surely, if all other engagements should be too weak, we can never *hide ourselves from our own flesh*. Add to this, that providence has left us open to the same mutability of human affairs, by which those who *are poor became so*; that we might not *be high-minded but fear*, and be ready to shew that compassion to others, which we do not know how soon we may need ourselves. *Give a portion to seven, and also to eight, for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth*, Eccles. xi. 2.

BUT that which should be to us christians above all engagements, is this, that our blessed Saviour himself has condescended to assume a particular relation to the poor, especially those who are pious and godly. He has left them, as it were, his representatives in the world, to receive what we would be willing to do for him, if he were himself on earth, and stood in need of any of these kind of good offices; and such a dignity has he put upon our charity as to assure us that *inasmuch as we do it to the least of his brethren, we do it to him*.

him. And I mention this the rather because 'tis not obscurely hinted in the text. *The poor, says our Lord, ye have always with you, but me ye have not always.* Shew respect to me now, and when I am removed let them take my place. And I think the wisdom of God in appointing that *the poor we should have always with us*, is in nothing more remarkable than in the scope and opportunity which the dispensation has given us to exhibit our loyalty and affection to the blessed Jesus. The mind when it is warm'd with a sense of the love of Christ, naturally casts about, and says, "*What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits? I love the Lord Jesus in sincerity*, to him I have sacrificed my most darling corruptions, and to him, I trust, *I am obedient in word and deed*; but he deserves more than all this, and I would fain give some yet more publick and open testimony of my affection to him. I could be glad to do something for him, like what *Mary* did, nor should I care who thought it waste, but him we have not always with us, he is now no more in the world."——Here now comes in the use of this dispensation; he has left a sort of people in the world to receive at our hands any testimony that we would be willing to give of our

our gratitude and affection to him. And, lastly, considering the poor as left, as it were, in his place, here's a contrivance to exalt charity from an human and social virtue into a christian grace: what we do for the poor, we do in obedience to a divine command, for the sake of Christ, and as an expression of our love to him; and thus our love to God, and compassion to men, are exhibited in the same action.

III. AND lastly, I am to shew what use we may make of these considerations for our own instruction and conduct.

I. WHAT has been said should teach us *all* to adore the wisdom of that providence that serves its own great purposes by all the events and occurrences of time. Various are the causes that concur to break the equality of men's circumstances and condition in the world; some are brought to poverty by their own extravagance and vices, some by oppression and the violence of men, some by the sins of their parents and progenitors, and some by the more immediate hand of God; how *excellent is God in counsel, how wonderful in working*, who is able, let poverty come how it will, to make it so useful? The afflictions and evils that are in the world, and even the
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sins and follies of men, under the conduct and direction of his adorable providence, shall be made subservient to his own glory and the general good.

2. THIS should be an instruction to the poor as to the temper with which they should entertain the lot which God has appointed for them: any further than poverty is the effect of your own imprudence, folly and want of care, there is nothing in it *absolutely* mean or *really* scandalous; there is nothing for which God *does* despise you, any wise man *will*, or any man *should*.

'Tis the lot providence hath appointed for you, and you should endeavour to be resigned, content and easy. Uncomfortable as your portion may be, God is serving his own great and wise designs in ordaining it for you; but, if that is not a thought sufficiently interesting, I add, you do not know in how much mercy, even to your selves, it is that this is made your lot. 'Tis an awful truth, that *it is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God*, Matt. xix. 23. and imports at least the peculiar danger of higher circumstances. Every state of life has its temptations, but who knows whether the temptations of a better

better condition might not be such as, at least to persons of your temper, would have prov'd fatal and ruinous. However this be, you ought implicitly to believe that, as *God knows our frame*, he placed you in lower circumstances, as those in which you could *best* promote his glory, and secure your own eternal welfare.

WHEN you have with such considerations as these, reconciled your minds to your lot, seriously apply your selves to answer those great ends of providence for which God disposed you into it; *In your patience possess your souls*; exercise trust and dependance on God; be weaning your selves more and more from this world, to which you, of all men, have so little to engage your affections: teach others fortitude under their trials by the strength of mind you discover under your's; and shame those, who without half your burdens, are ready to repine and sink, and *charge God foolishly*. And as your poverty is a ready call to diligence and industry, in the station where God has cast you, be ye diligent and industrious; thus you will, under all your meanness of condition, be greater blessings to the world, than thousands that only live by the sweat of other men's brows, and answer no valuable end

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in life. *Colos. iii. 22, 23, 24.* the apostle giving advice to *servants*, i. e. slaves (for servants then were absolutely at their master's disposal) says, *obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart fearing God: and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.* The final applause of the judge will not depend on the part we have acted, but the manner of our acting it. The unsearchable riches of Christ, the riches of faith, and the immense treasures of glory, lie as open to you, as to the greatest prince on earth; make sure thereof riches *somewhere*: and as you have no treasures on earth, lay up for your selves treasures in heaven; for to be poor and miserable as to both worlds, is a dreadful thought.

WHATSOEVER has been said *above* for the encouragement and consolation of the poor, is by no means intended to weaken the obligations of that great law of subordination which arises from the different conditions of human life, and by which the most useful purposes are served in the providential government of the world. Out
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of poverty naturally rises dependance; this therefore should be acknowledged by a modest, humble and peaceable demeanour, and by submission to superiors in every thing, where higher rights and interests are not concerned.

III. WHAT has been said should engage those that are rich in the world, to consider the ends of providence in the dispensation I have been speaking of, and as far as they are concerned, to endeavour to comport with them. From this dispensation you may learn patience and content, and see the reason you have to be thankful to providence for your wealth and plenty. If at any time you find uneasiness arising at your own condition, or that you are ready to envy the superiority of others to you, 'tis only to take a turn into the cottages of the poor, 'tis only to observe their difficulties and inconveniences, and your minds will be brought to rights again. The farther you enter into this matter, the more you will see what useful instruments of providence the honest and industrious poor are, and how the safety, comfort and happiness of the greatest depends upon them: the curious dish, the fine wrought garment, that is the delight and the pride too of the rich, is the produce of the toil and hazardous enterprizes

of the poor. *The king himself is served by the field*, as cultivated by the labours of the husbandman, *Ecclesi. v. 9.* So that no man of sense, or that knows the state of the world, will treat the poor, as such, with insolence and disdain; especially, when there is no connexion between any external circumstances and real intrinsic worth; when there is a prosperity of fools on one hand, and on the other most choice and excellent souls have been sometimes found hidden under the obscurity and disadvantages of a mean and low condition. Finally, as it is evidently one end of providence in appointing that *the poor we should have always with us*, that we may relieve their wants, and promote their welfare, we should, as far as we are able, comply with that design. Though the providence of God has appointed this subordination, yet you are not to consider the poor merely as your vassals. Dependence of man on men is mutual, and is the bond that holds all the world together. If you have the poor always with you for some purposes, the same providence has ordain'd that they should have you always with them for others; in which view you are as much subordinate to them as they are to you. Accordingly you are to compassionate their distresses, relieve their cares,

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assist their families, and do all that you can to make them easy in themselves, and useful to the publick.

It was with this good intention that the charity-school in *Gravel-Lane, Southwark*, to which I come this day humbly to bespeak your regard, was first erected, and is still supported.

I SHALL read you the state of the school, as it stands this first of *January 1741*; and then beg leave earnestly to recommend it to you.

THE foundation of this school was laid in the year 1687; in the reign of King *James II.* The occasion of it was this; One *Poulton*, a Jesuit, had set up a popish school, and given publick notice, that he would instruct the children of the poor gratis. Upon which Mr. *Arthur Shallet*, Mr. *Samuel Warburton* and Mr. *Ferdinando Holland*, (all members of this congregation, in the Reverend Mr. *Nathanael Vincent's* time,) laid the foundation of this school, to avoid the dangerous consequences of a popish school, and to provide for the instruction of the poor in the protestant way.

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THE number of the scholars at first was forty, which, afterwards increased to fifty, and now to one hundred and thirty; who are taught to read, write and cypher, and instructed in the principles of religion, that they may be qualified for the service of God and man.

It may be said to be the first school the protestant dissenters were concerned in. Here objects are received without distinction of parties, the general good being intended. It is situated in one of the poorest parts about the city, and the children of the poorest sort of Watermen and Fishermen, are here taught without any expence to their parents, and are furnished with Bibles, Testaments, Catechisms, writing, and cyphering books.

THE charges have been defrayed by the gifts and subscriptions of private persons, with one annual collection on New-Year's Day, at the school hitherto, (but at this place for the future) and another collection once a year in the city; together with the kind remembrance of some in their last wills.

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THIS is a plain and undisguized account of the state of this school. Upon which I shall make a few remarks.

THERE are two objections commonly made against Charity-Schools.

THE one is, that the learning which is there given, has a tendency to raise the children of the poor above their proper rank, to give them ambitious views, and make them unwilling, after they have had a taste of a school-life, to stoop to the more laborious offices of their station. The other objection is, that the children are here brought up in a bigotted zeal for some one or other of the distinguishing party-names, by which the christian world is so unhappily divided and rent in pieces.

LET those schools of charity that come within the reach of these objections, answer them; but I think there is nothing in either of them that in the least affects this before us. And indeed the managers of it seem to be aware of them, and to have laid a plan for their school, against which no objection of this kind can possibly lie.

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FOR as to the first, you find by their account, that the children of the poor are *only* taught to read, write and cypher; and I apprehend the two latter, not generally to any greater exactness than is necessary to qualify them for the lower services of life: and the present state of the world is such, that a man finds infinite inconveniences in the most servile and mechanic business unless he is able to read, and write, and cypher in some manner or other.

As to the other objection, that children in Charity-schools are made furious bigots, that is avoided here. The school was set up upon a protestant catholic foundation; *objects are received without distinction of parties, the general good being intended.*

A SCHOOL set up on this bottom deserves encouragement in every view that can be mentioned. If *morality* and *religion* were out of the question, a good deal of the learning that is here given, is necessary to make the poor useful in civil life, at *least* they can't by a great deal be so useful without as with it. But how much worse than useless the poorer youth must be, who are left, without guide, overseer or ruler, to the passions of a bad nature

ture, to the ill examples of those about them, ignorant of religion or so much as the obligations of common morality. — Let the present unexampled corruption and wickedness of the lower orders of men be witness.

BUT the foot on which I would principally recommend this school to your support and assistance is, that it is a nursery for religion: the case you have had laid before you, tells you the *children of the poor are here instructed in the principles of religion*. Religion! that does indeed *qualify for the service of God and man*. It purifies the soul, sanctifies the life, makes men fit for the other world; and with all this is the only sure foundation of mutual trust and confidence among men. For *seriously*, under any strong temptation, what can restrain and awe the man who has not the fear of God, and the apprehension of a future account? And having mentioned this, give me leave to urge it a little, because it contains an argument of temporal interest, if there was no more. The children of this school are training up for service in the world, and will in time come to be dispersed, either actually into families, or in some way or other be retain-

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ers to them: and wherever they are, 'tis *natural*, 'tis *necessary*, that some degree of trust and confidence should be reposed in them, Suppose then one of them disposed into your own family; it is possible indeed for persons to counter-act the principles of the most strict and serious education; but when the most proper human means have been used, we must hope the best. Well then, suppose him modest, courteous, diligent, and faithful to all those interests of your's that he has committed to him, and every thing that his education has charged upon him; how great a blessing is such a servant in a family, and how well employed do you see the contribution was, that helped to bear the charges of his tuition? Suppose the same person taken into your family unprincipled and uninstructed, and with nothing but human fears to restrain him, he might — have corrupted your children, embezzelled your substance, and in ways that it is horrid to think of, done you irreparable mischief.

I HAVE said so much, that I shall add but one consideration more, which will arise from hence, that the day of our present assembling is the first day of a new year. This is a proper time to make a stand,

stand, and take a review of *the way which the Lord your God has led you*; and to recognize *that goodness and mercy that has followed you all your lives. Upheld by the Lord, you continue to this day*, when so many of your acquaintance and friends were called in the last year down to the silent dust, and *time with them is now no longer*: possibly God may have blest the industry of some of you the last year, and increased your substance considerably; however that be, 'tis through his goodness that you are allowed to enter upon a new period and revolution of time: begin this year with an act of charity, as a thankful acknowledgment of the divine goodness to you in the years that are past; and as the compliment of the day is for your friends to *wish you a happy new year*, depend upon the blessing of God to *make it so*. The salutation and request which David sends by his young men to Nabal is so apposite, the one to the day, and the other to the occasion, that I cannot help concluding with it; though I hope and believe it will have a better effect now than it had then. Thus do we say, Thus do the YOUNG MEN that are with us say, *to him that liveth in prosperity, peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be to all that thou hast.*

*last. — Let the young men find favour in
thine eyes, for we come in a GOOD DAY:
give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine
hand, unto thy SERVANTS. I Sam. xxv.
6, 8.*

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